



die thede Stresemannstrasse 374 [Haus D] | 22761 Hamburg |
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Life Was Suddenly More Beautiful

A documentary by Hanno Krieg, Germany 1999, 55 minutes

SYNOPSIS

On hearing the news of Hitler's death, my father – who had been reared in Berlin as an "all trusting Nazi" – believed his world had collapsed around him. At that time he was recovering from a war wound in Prague. Soon however my father would begin his search for a new perspective in life.

With support from the US government, the MORAL REARMAMENT utilised the ideological vacuum created by the "zero hour". The group concentrated on the former Nazis and communists, intending to convert them to an ideological brand of Christianity – with success. At one of the movement's meetings my father met the Czech John Pribram who challenged him to fight together from that moment on for a better world. And my father took up his offer.

In the 50s, the movement expanded and even my aunt joined it. Over the following years the MORAL REARMAMENT developed into an instrument of the Cold War. However ultimately the movement would fail in its efforts to create the prototype for a new kind of human being.

My father and my aunt talk about their paths within the movement, and through this about the functions played by guilt, confession, forgiveness, memory and belief.

BIOGRAPHY/FILMOGRAPHY

Hanno Krieg

Born 1965 Berlin, Germany, where he attended school and learned carpentry. Studied at the HfbK Hamburg College of Fine Arts, awarded an Arts Diploma in 1997.

Worked as a cameraman, editor and writer on the following films:

1992 **Thanks for the Video God's Blessing**, 14 minutes.

Using material which had long been ignored, a video was assembled on the value of a pizza-box, orderliness, the difference between men and women, and about my brother.

1993 **Zweibrücken Among Others**, 18 minutes.

A puppet theatre on tour, the only form of existence possible for my sisters for more than ten years. A stock-taking turns into a violent crisis the cause of which is the everyday working conditions, to say the least.

1995 **That's Reality, Hanno**, 28 minutes.

A film about the Guardian Angels in Berlin, a "good" youth gang which patrols the Berlin underground and fights against violence, racism and sexism.



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Since 1995 a member of "die thede e.V", an association of Hamburg documentary filmmakers, where he has worked on the series of screenings and events, "Film and Discussion". Worked as a cameraman and editor for other documentaries.

1997 to 1998 worked regularly on the ARTE TV channel magazine program, BRUT.

1999 participated in the long-term observation of the development of a newly built city section in Hamburg under the auspices of the "Art in Public Spaces" project.

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE MORAL RE-ARMAMENT MOVEMENT, MRA

In the 1920s, the American preacher Frank Buchman established an evangelical movement with the title, "Oxford Group". Its aim was to directly influence society in that its followers – by publicly acknowledging, confessing and atoning for their mistakes – would demonstrate the consequences of their transformation. Among their doctrines was the conviction that God speaks with every man and that one can experience his inspiration through silence. During the 30s the membership grew in many European countries.

As a reaction to the radicalising of political life and the arms build-up in Europe, the movement renamed itself MORAL REARMAMENT in 1938. By doing this it wanted to make clear its intention to exert its influence on political events. In Germany for instance, Frank Buchman made several efforts to arrange a meeting with Hitler, something which however never occurred. For the movement, the dangers to social and political freedom came in particular from the all-embracing atheism and materialism (especially in the form of communism).

During the war, Buchman went to America where his movement further expanded. Here he managed to win over influential figures from the economic and political spheres to his work. And during this time the movement also developed the theatre medium as the most essential element of their activities.

Immediately after the war ended, the Moral Rearmament began their work in Europe from Switzerland. Thanks to their connections with the military governor Lucius Clay, they were able to arrange travel documents for many German representatives (including Hans Boeckler and Konrad Adenauer). In Switzerland at the MRA conferences in Caux, this was the first opportunity for some of these German parliamentarians to meet other European politicians since the war.

With invitations from the minister presidents in the German federal states of Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg and North Rhine-Westphalia, the MRA could now begin its work in Germany. The presentation of a Christian orientated ideology as providing a new perspective on life as well as reconciliation among the former warring parties were essential aspects of this work.



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A further focal point of the "work for change" was the industrialised Ruhr region where an omen of the future conflict between East and West could be seen in the tensions there between the employers and their workers. With support from the US Army, a group of amateur actors travelled throughout Germany in 1948 and performed the plays "The Good Road" and "The Forgotten Factor" in industrial areas, cinemas and city theatres. The influence of the MRA on several communist worker committees in factories was so powerful that the East German Communist Party regarded them as a genuine threat. Indeed any members who had subsequent contact with the MRA were to be expelled from the party. Yet some colliery managers did give the worker committees special leave and even paid for a part of their journey to the conferences in Switzerland.

The movement continued to grow until the beginning of the 60s when there were about 1,000 fulltime members working voluntarily for the MRA. At this stage a range of theatre pieces and films were being produced.

Following the death in 1961 of Frank Buchman, founder of the MRA, and that of his successor Peter Howard in 1965, the consequences of differing opinions became obvious with a division within the ranks in 1968. From this would emerge the UP WITH PEOPLE movement. However because of this division, many members of the Moral Rearmament lost the basis for their livelihood. Although the movement experienced a rapid loss in its meaning and purpose, it continued with its work (albeit in a less dogmatic manner).

In 1996, the 50th anniversary of the European centre was celebrated in Caux, Switzerland. Today, the movement still maintains a network of followers and runs centres in many places.